

Cere- into the canals and fields is a
great event in the Egyptian
Xerved in year- At Cairo the operation generally
takes place between
Egypt at the sixth and the sixteenth of
August, and till lately was
of the tting attended by ceremonies which deserve
to be noticed, because
dams early they were probably handed
down from antiquity. An
ugusi. ancjent canals known by the name of the
Khalij, formerly
passed through the native town of Cairo.
Near Its entrance
the canal was crossed by a dam of earth,
very broad at
the bottom and diminishing in breadth
upwards, which used
to be constructed before or soon after the
Nile began to
rise. In front of the dam, on the side of
the river, was
reared a truncated cone of earth
called the 'arooseh or
The Bride " bride," on the top of which a
little maize or millet was
of the Nile. genera]y sown. This " bride " was
commonly washed down
by the rising tide a week or a fortnight
before the cutting
of the dam. Tradition runs that the old
custom was to
deck a young virgin in gay apparel
and throw her into
the river as a sacrifice to obtain a
plentiful Inundation.¹
Sacrifices Certainly human sacrifices were
offered for a similar purpose
s^ages^t b7 the Wajagga of German East
Africa down to recent
the cutting: years. These people irrigate
their fields by means of skil-
am " fully constructed channels, through
which they conduct the
water of the mountain brooks and rivers to
the thirsty land.
They Imagine that the spirits of their
forefathers dwell
in the rocky basins of these rushing streams,
and that they
would resent the withdrawal of the water
to Irrigate the
fields If compensation were not
offered to them. The
water-rate paid to them consisted of a child,

uncircumcised
 and of unblemished body, who was decked
 with ornaments
 and bells and thrown Into the river to
 drown, before they
 ventured to draw off the water Into the
 irrigation channel
 Having thrown him in, his executioners
 shewed a clean
 pair of heels, because they expected the river
 to rise in flood
 at once on receipt of the water-rate.² In
 similar circum-
 stances the Njamus of British East Africa
 sacrifice a sheep
 before they let the water of the stream flow
 into the ditch

¹ E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1895), ch. xxvi.
² Bruno Gutmann, *Feldbausitten und Wachstumsbrauche der Wadschagga*, "Zeitschrift für Ethnologie," xlv. (1913) pp. 484 sq.